

Michigan Child Care Matters

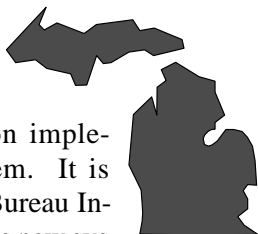


DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & INDUSTRY SERVICES
Bureau of Regulatory Services
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

MORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
FOR CHILDREN

Issue 58 Fall, 2001

Director's Corner



In September, the Division implemented a new computer system. It is called BITS, which stands for Bureau Information Tracking System. This new system will allow licensing consultants to access licensing data much more quickly and accurately. In addition to all the routine business licensing staff must do every day, they will be putting in lots of time learning the ins and outs of BITS.

The Bureau will be better able to monitor activity on a license, such as when applications and renewal packets were mailed out and received in the local office, and when inspections were requested and completed. Unlike our current computer system, staff will be able to see the entire history of a license on BITS.

The special investigation process will also be tracked on the BITS system. It is my hope that this will ensure that you receive the results of a special investigation in a timely manner, so that any violations that may have been found, can be corrected.

Staff have been completing interim visits to licensees in the last several years. BITS notifies staff when these inspections are due. BITS also reminds staff of upcoming renewal inspections and, for family homes, 10% sample inspections. It will even notify the consultants when a licensee has not submitted a corrective action plan!

There are some significant changes that are being instituted with BITS that will impact you, our customers. Original licenses are issued with an effective date of "today," the actual day the information is entered into BITS. Since licenses are issued to a specific person at a specific address, when a licensee moves to a new home or facility, the existing license will be closed, and a new, original provisional license issued. Family home registrants will also be issued a new certificate of registration with a new number when they move; and centers and

Continued on page 14

Inside This Issue

Page 2	Let Them Dig Worms
Page 3	Sensory Exploration Table
Page 4	Open Art At Home
Page 5	Open Art At Home - continued
Page 6	Reading Through Movement: K-4th Grade
Page 7	Lead Hurts Kids
Page 8	Creative Movement-The Magic Carpet Ride
Page 9	Creative Movement- continued
Page 10	Math In The Everyday Lives of Children
Page 11	Provider's Corner
Page 12	News From FIA
Page 13	Letter From A Provider
Page 14	Recalls From CPSC
Page 15	Resources:Program activities
Page 16	Licensing Update



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LET THEM DIG WORMS

Beth Fryer

*Family Day Care Home Provider
Grand Traverse County*

In today's society, our role as day care providers has broadened immensely. Our goal is to prepare children for a smooth and confident transition into "formal education." Knowing all this, I felt that I needed to enhance my children's science experiences, so I attended several workshops focusing on the subject. Filled with excitement and enthusiasm, I prepared our first "real" science experiment, "dancing spaghetti." As six children, ages 2, 3, and 4 gathered around, we did the experiment. They looked at me as if to say, "So, now what?" I thought, "So much for science...." Then I remembered something else I had learned...children learn by doing. So outside we went, armed with a bucket of food scraps we had saved for the compost pile. We dumped; we stirred. We discovered huge balls of wiggly worms. The children flipped! We stirred, we watched, we were experiencing SCIENCE. They loved it. We collected a few worms, put them into a jar with dirt, and covered them to keep them dark and added food and water. We made a habitat. It was great! Now this is SCIENCE!!

There are so many wonderful and rewarding experiences just waiting for us to discover. My feeling is that the best science curriculum is Mother Nature's. I've come to develop several activities that the children especially love. I'd like to share them with you.

In the spring, we delight in seeing the milkweed plants pop up all over. While others pull them out, we water and nurture them because we know these attract Monarch caterpillars. We patiently check them everyday hoping to find these white, yellow and black beauties. We carefully prepare the aquarium we use for the habitat and wait. One year we collected 21. We fed them, watched them go into chrysalis and then the big day, they hatch. Each child takes a turn releasing the butterflies. It doesn't get any better than this.

We do our part to recycle, as we always have a supply of empty peanut butter jars on hand with lids drilled, just waiting for the bug collecting to start. It's great to hear their excitement when they discover a bug—"Bug alert!" they yell. We collect them and attempt to identify them and release them.

Hiking in the woods is another favorite thing to do. We are always able to discover something new.

One day we found a nest of tent worms right at eye level. While I was saying, "yuck" they were saying, "coooool". After observing their work, the children decided we should call them "Mother Nature's Enemy".

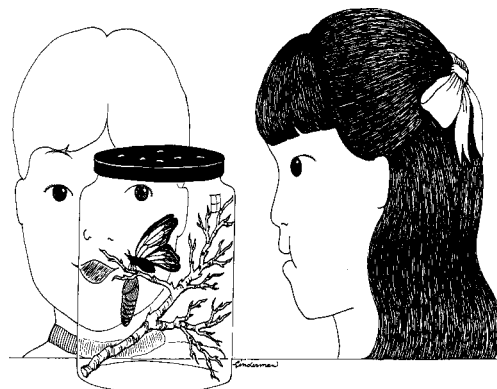
Usually the busiest area in the play yard is the sand and water area. I make sure there is a large assortment of containers, tubing, spoons, scoops, a length of gutter, and measuring cups available. They spend hours making wonderful discoveries.

It seems our excitement has rubbed off on others. I frequently have day care parents bring in all kinds of great stuff, unusual caterpillars, salamanders, turtles, frogs, to name a few. I even had a dad ask if we could use a bat. WOW! Could we ever...

In my day care facility, we have a large sliding door. We have positioned several bird feeders just outside. The children call this Mother Nature's Movie. We watch the birds come and go, and if we're lucky we might see a squirrel or bunny. We have had great times discussing the different birds. It's especially wonderful with the change of seasons that we experience.

I knew my science enthusiasm had rubbed off when my own son, now 17, having grown up in my day care, came home from fishing. He announced that he had brought me a present. Looking into his bucket, I found my present was 3 big crayfish. The children and I were ecstatic. We all worked together to build a "short term" habitat for our special guests. This turned out to be one of the highlights of our summer.

When using Mother Nature's curriculum as a basis for your science program, the experiences the children will have are absolutely endless. These experiences will not only nurture their knowledge of nature, they will also instill a wonderful sense of wonder in each and every child. □



Sensory Exploration Table

*Kelly Vannette
Kids First Learning Place
Barry County*

Why are sensory tables important in a home-based day care? Why should caregivers be responsible for cleaning up the mess after its contents have been dumped all over the floor? Is it really worth all of the effort you must put into it?

Young children are more likely to understand and remember relationships, concepts and strategies that they acquire through first-hand meaningful experience. For children, life is not what happens tomorrow. Life is what they experience right now through their senses. Adding a sensory table to your room will enable your children to use their senses to smell, see, hear and touch the contents inside. What a wonderful concept to foster. If we want to promote sensory awareness in our children, we must become toddlers again and discover wonder in everything they see.

The idea that a sensory table is only sand and water is a myth. The things you can use are limited only by your imagination. Sensory items do not need to be messy. Put in anything you want and be creative. Gather things like milk caps, dominoes, cotton balls, Styrofoam packing peanuts, playing cards, blocks, legos and many other manipulatives. Messier items can be saved for warmer days when activities can be outdoors.

Believing that toddlers are too young to master the concept of a texture table is another misconception. We often think that toddlers will put the contents of the table in to their mouths, which we fear as dangerous. While this may be true, with adult supervision toddlers take great joy in safely exploring.

Consider the following techniques when planning sensory awareness experiences for young children:

- Provide a variety of experiences that nurture all the senses.
- Use small plastic jars with different odors for them to smell.
- Place objects with different textures out for children to touch.
- Encourage them to listen to the different sounds that objects make.

Participate in these activities with the children instead of simply observing. Initiating conversation will draw out the children's curiosity and enhance their

language concepts during the activity.

How can you create sensory experiences in your home without buying expensive commercial tables? Here are some inexpensive alternatives:

- Ask your parents to donate clear plastic bottles of all sizes. Fill them with oils, glitter, confetti and water, beans, and other items that may spark visual or auditory curiosity. Hot glue the top on so curious hands cannot open it.

- Buy an "under the bed" storage container. Not only do you have the convenience of a useful storage place, but you also get the convenience of bringing out the table when you are ready for it.

- Plastic shoebox containers make for great "individual" sensory use. These are inexpensive and you can have several so each child can have one for himself. This works well for toddlers who tend to argue and have sharing difficulties.

- Place "goosey" items in plastic zip lock bags for the children to squeeze, mix and manipulate. Try putting two different colors of finger paints into the bag and have the children squeeze and mix until the colors form one solid (ex. Blue + red= purple).

- Offer a squirt of shaving cream out on a table for the children to sink their patties into. This activity can be enhanced by putting food coloring in the shaving cream. This is fairly easy to clean up and makes your house smell great! Hint: Try to buy unscented, this still smells good, but is not too strong. The menthol kind tends to make your eyes water.

- Take advantage of unplanned experiences to involve children in sensory exploration. When you go for walks, encourage children to explore within safe and reasonable limits. What is under that nearby rock? How do the leaves smell? How does the bark from different trees feel? Stop for a moment and listen. Can they hear the trees shifting in the wind, the birds overhead, the sounds of the city in the distance?

The possibilities are endless. Just let your imagination work and you will be surprised at the wonderful reactions your children will have toward this learning experience. Your work will definitely pay off. Have fun! ▫

Open Art At Home

Mary Pat Jennings, Licensing Consultant
Isabella County

"Can we do art?" the little girl asked. "Go ahead, you know where everything is," answered the provider. Soon the girl and several other day care children were retrieving paper, scissors, glue, crayons and collage supplies from a small bookcase in the day care home kitchen and taking them to the kitchen table. As the provider and I discussed licensing matters, the children began using the materials in different ways. Two made collages, one began drawing and another child began working on an elaborate paper construction using colored paper, a paper punch and string. They worked independently and were all happily engrossed when I left some 40 minutes later.

This provider told me that she tries to offer open access to art materials for the greater part of each day. She requires the children to use the materials properly, to put them away when finished and to limit all artwork to the kitchen table, but she does not plan specific projects.

As I drove away, I thought about art activities I had observed in other settings that employed pre-drawn and pre-cut pieces which the children assembled with help and direction from adults. Projects that are put together with pre-made parts or are planned with a specific result in mind offer children experience in following directions, but do not allow for experimentation and independent thought. These activities also need outside preparation time and can require constant help from hovering adults. They give children the message that their own work and ideas are not valuable and limits opportunities for self-expression.

In addition to preparing "projects," think about how you can encourage meaningful open-ended art experiences for the children in your care. If you have never allowed open access to art materials, start gradually. Begin by offering just one medium. Talk to the children about how to care for and conserve materials, and offer guidance and direction as needed. Once you and the children are comfortable, add a second medium.

Resist the temptation to tell children what to make, but feel free to motivate them with experiences and ideas. If the children are excited about seeing squirrels chase each other up the tree in your backyard, talk about how they move, what color they are, and what their tails look like. Ask the children if they

think the squirrels have a nest in the tree. Try to find some pictures of squirrels, read a story about squirrels or make up a squirrel song. Children will eventually use their observations about shape, color, texture, movement and other details in their artwork.

You can also guide children in appropriate use of art tools and supplies. Help children gain control of materials by demonstrating how to wipe a brush so that it will not drip or how to form clay into a ball. When children paint, do not try to direct their work, but do remind them to keep their marks on the paper. Teach children how to paste by showing them how to apply small amounts of glue or paste to the piece of paper. Put large placemats or trays on the table when children work with play dough and require them to keep all of the dough on the mat or tray.

When you paint with two and three year olds, expect to have lots of soggy brown paintings that result from over-painting the same piece of paper again and again. When you make pasting pictures, understand that your two-year-old may paste all of her collage pieces in a stack in one spot on the background paper.

Give children plenty of time and opportunity to explore and manipulate different art media. These could include drawing materials (crayons, pencils, colored pencils, markers and chalk and pastels), painting materials, collage materials and clay or play dough. If you keep these basic materials on hand, it will not be necessary to continually present new and exciting art projects. Their use is open-ended, and children of all ages will use them again and again in developmentally appropriate ways. Even if your space and resources are limited, you can offer your children the chance to draw or paint pictures, cut and paste collages and model with play or play dough.

Materials

Paper

Paper is expensive, so become a scavenger. Try using the insides of split out cereal boxes. Rolls of heavy, brown builders' paper available at home improvement stores makes durable painting paper. Remember to ask parents and friends if they have access to discarded paper or cardboard at their place of employment.

Brushes

Half inch to one inch wide brushes are recommended for young children. These can be expensive, so try using ½ to 1 inch wide house-painting brushes

[back to index](#)

from the hardware store. The bristles can be a bit long and floppy for successful use by preschoolers so modify them by trimming the bristle part of the brushes to $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length.

Paint

Tempera or poster paint has a creamy texture and is more satisfying for young children to use than watercolors. Tempera is available in art, craft and school supply stores and comes in both powdered and liquid varieties. The liquid kind is easier to use, but powder paint is less expensive and lasts longer. Home made paint can be mixed up using cornstarch, sugar and food coloring. The colors are transparent and not as bright as tempera, but the ingredients are only as far away as the kitchen cupboard.

Homemade Paint

*$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
3 tablespoons sugar
4 cups water
food coloring*

Mix first three ingredients together. Cook over medium heat until clear. Divide into four containers and add 10 drops of food coloring to each portion.

Containers

Squat shaped, sturdy containers work best for painting. Try putting yogurt containers in a muffin tin. The tin will hold the containers steady and you can throw them away at clean up time. Pint-size ice cream containers with lids work well too. Cut a hole in the top large enough to admit the paintbrush and you will have an almost spill proof container. Line the container with a sandwich bag to make clean up almost effortless. Do remember that even spill-proof containers can spill, so do not give children more than two or three tablespoons of paint at a time. Remember that two, three and four-year-olds do better if there is a brush in each paint container. When children are $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5, show them how to rinse out brushes when they change colors. Then show them how to blot the rinsed brush on an old sponge or rag before dipping into a new color.

Paste

White school glue bonds well, but it can be expensive. Liquid laundry starch can be substituted for some projects. Pour a small amount in a container and add an inexpensive brush to apply it. Be aware

that starch will only work with lightweight paper and tissue. Another alternative is cooked paste made with ingredients from your kitchen.

Cooked Paste

*3 tablespoons sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cornstarch
4 cups water*

Blend together and cook over medium heat until clear. Store in a container with a tight lid

Modeling Materials

Modeling is an activity that allows children to work three dimensionally, so if your budget will permit occasionally invest in self-hardening clay. This is more stable than play dough, and it will be more satisfying for children who want to make objects that stand up and hold a shape. You can keep play dough on hand at all times. Make dough that is just as nice as the store bought variety with flour, salt and oil.

Play Dough

*2 cups flour
1 cup salt
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
2 tablespoons oil
1 teaspoon food coloring
2 cups water*

Mix liquid ingredients together. Combine dry ingredients and add liquid mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat until dough leaves the side of the pan. Remove from the pan and knead for a few minutes. Store in tightly covered container.



Respect each child's work and try not to expect adult-pleasing results from all children. Remember that the process of painting is more important to children than a finished product. □

Reading Through Movement (K-4th Grade)

Lisa Bredahl, Director
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Kalamazoo

Learning to read should be fun and involve as many senses as possible. While learning the simple rules of reading comes naturally to most children, there are those who need to not only learn the rules, but practice these rules by using multi-sensory skills. Multi-sensory skills involve tactile, oral, auditory, visual, and movement. All children can benefit from learning to read these skills.

In learning, people retain 10% of what they read; 20% of what they hear; 30% of what they see; 50% of what they see and hear; 70% of what they hear, see and say; and 90% of what they hear, see, say and do. Through exposure to letters, words and books using music, props, dance and instruments, students learn and retain a lot more than just listening to the teacher lecture.

Dance is a “non-competitive” art form that allows children to express themselves in their own special way. There are no wrong or right answers in movement. Children should be given the freedom of expressing themselves through movement without too much technical structure.

Teachers, caregivers, and parents can help children “learn to read” through movement games and activities. First, pick out a book that seems to have a lot of movement qualities. Sit with the children and read the book. Now that you have read the book, you can do the following movement games:



NARRATION GAME

The teacher reads each page of the book out loud as the children act out the story. (The teacher could pick a few children to read various pages too.) The teacher should pause after each page to see the movements that are created. Example: “It began to rain. The rain formed giant puddles.” Children could move slowly in the space- like sprinkles of rain. The children could then move faster and faster like a rain-storm. Then the children could freeze in a shape. The children could then jump over the puddles with two

feet, one foot, leap or slip and fall in the puddle. It is truly up to the children what they would like to do in the puddle.

ASSIGNED PARTS GAME

The teacher would assign different groups of children to different characters or objects from the story. As the teacher narrates, the children act out their characters through movement. Example: “The children gathered rocks.” Some children could be the rocks and some could be the gatherers. The children could roll the rocks, push the rocks, jump over the rocks or discover their own movements with the children portraying rocks.

When planning a movement class, it is important that you follow this simple class structure:

1. Warm-up (Approximately 5 minutes): This should be medium-sized gross motor skills, such as marching, walking, galloping, skipping and the like. This will warm up the students muscles to prevent any injuries.

2. (a) Working on Emotions: This is an important skill to practice so that the children can fully act out their movement to each book. The teacher should call out the movements that he/she wants as the children perform the movements. Below are some good examples of emotive movement. *Happily* skip, *tired* walks, *sad* tip toes, *excited* jumps, *angry* marches, *loving* spins.

Variation

For students just learning to read, focusing on vowel and consonant sounds is vital to success. You should focus on a few letters at a time during each class.

(b) Working on Short Vowels “A,E,I,O,U”: Have the teacher say and show the letter and make the short vowel sound. Have the students repeat the sound out loud. Then the teacher should ask for specific movements using the short vowel sound. For example: Apple-children should portray an apple by swinging on a tree, falling, and rolling. The teacher

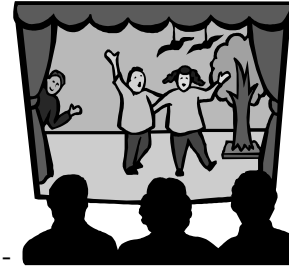
should repeat the work apple several times during the movement exercise. This idea can be used for all of the short as well as long vowel sounds.

3. Adjective Game: This skill is essential in movement because it describes how the movement should be done. The instructor should go through the book beforehand and write down all of the adjectives that can be found. The teacher should call out the adjectives, one at a time, and add a movement to each adjective. For example: *Little* walk, *scary* crawls, *straight* gallops across the room, *curvy* runs around the space.

4. The Story: Now have the class sit down and listen to the teacher read the story, or if the children are older, they could read the story to themselves before the movement class begins and then the teacher could review the story.

5. Movement Game: The teacher should decide what game will be played-the narration game or the assigned parts game. Once this is decided, you will need to see if any props can be used. Some examples of props are scarves, ribbons, balls, hula-hoops. Of course this all depends on what your book is about. The children and teacher should act out the entire book.

6. Performing Your Book: Now that the children have danced to the entire book, they are ready to show other school classes or a group of teachers. This is not always necessary, but it is quite rewarding for the children work of fore an occur af-classes or m e n t t h i s competi- means of learning.



to show off their art. Acting be-audience could ter a series of after each move-class. Remember, should never be tive but a

7. Cool Down: Stretch on the floor. While stretching, the teacher could talk about what was learned; possibly what adjectives the students remember; or, what was their favorite part of the story.

I hope that all teachers try to incorporate some of these ideas into their classrooms. It is a great way to add to their reading curriculum. □

LEAD HURTS KIDS

Leaves are falling, and temperatures are a bit on the chilly side! As a result, children will be spending more and more time indoors. Playing inside the home, daycare facility or preschool can be dangerous for children, if lead hazards are lurking, especially for young toddlers who seem to put everything into their mouths.

Did you know that children under the age of six years are busy developing their brain and nervous system? Unfortunately, that is exactly the target for damage by lead dust that may be present in their environment. A myth exists that children must be eating paint chips to become lead poisoned, when in fact, it is deteriorating pre-1978 paint that has crumbled into lead dust that is the culprit. Luckily, there are some simple things that we can do to prevent the lead dust from getting into the children's bodies and causing damage.

Be on the lookout for chipping and peeling paint in pre-1978 homes and facilities. If you see any obvious paint chips in window troughs, window sills, or

the floor near windows or doors, take a damp paper towel, wipe them up, and dispose of the paper towels in a plastic trash bag. If affordable, spray the area with water mist, wet scrape the paint, and stabilize it with two coats of latex paint. If paint stabilization is not affordable, temporarily cover the hazard with duct tape, contact paper, or move a piece of heavy furniture in front of the hazard to prevent the child's access to the area. When vacuuming the floor and furniture, ALWAYS use a vacuum with a HEPA filter. These vacuums are available from many local health departments, environmental health, on free loan. Call your local health department to inquire.

For further information about childhood lead poisoning and ways to prevent it, call Michigan Department of Community Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, (517) 335-8885. For assistance with remediation and abatement of lead hazards, call Lead Hazard Remediation Program, Toll free (866) 691-LEAD (5323). □

Creative Movement

Mary Jane Heppner-Gamble
Children's Dance Teacher

Editor's note: *Creative Movement activities allow children to express themselves through movement. Each child's physical movements are unique. The following is the second of a series of creative movements experiences conducted with teachers during an inservice training session.*

The Magic Carpet Ride

(A run through of this lesson is presented beforehand in a ten minute presentation.)

"Does anyone know what this is?"

(A little plastic genie lamp is held up to the audience.)

Someone guessed it was a magic lamp.

Me: "Maybe you're right," as I began to shake it, knock on it, tap it, turn it over, even blow on it.

"Hmmm, let's see...how do you work this thing?"

Teachers: "You need to rub it."

Me: "You're right...look what's coming out of the lamp!"

(As I proceed to pull out a beautiful and colorful piece of sheer fabric the size of a scarf.)

"This would be a great magic carpet!"

As I showed everyone the easiest way to place this carpet on the floor, as my experience with pre-schoolers has taught me, this is not always a simple task: hold the carpet(scarf) by two opposite corners and take three steps backwards as you place it on the floor and proceed to sit on them. I share my experiences with the teachers about children that need extra help in handling this particular task and how satisfying it is to observe a child who finally masters it.

Now it is time for everyone to select a color of carpet (scarf) from the assorted colors provided :red, blue, fuchsia and of course, pink. Now the lesson begins.

Me: I ask them if they would watch the movie *Aladdin* while I do some chores. Then I ask the teachers to recite after me the following in a very bored voice:

"OK, but we've seen the movie *Aladdin* a million times!"

"Would you watch it just one more time?"

Teachers: (sighing) "OK."

I pretend to leave them alone and proceed to start the music playing "**It's A Whole New World**" from the *Aladdin* soundtrack. As the music plays, I visually sway my body in all directions, holding my arms out to my side creating a sense of balance in mid air, depicting flight. Suddenly our carpets begin to fly. As they travel on this journey, I give them creative visualization guiding them to the lands they soon visit:

Me: "Duck under the window sill."

Teachers: (Heads automatically bowed. When heads arose again, I then told them...)

Me: "You are higher than the trees! Up in the clouds! And soon will be in Ponyland!"

Using chimes as an audio signal, I instructed them to use their carpets as tails and gallop physically through Ponyland around the room. After leaving Ponyland, everyone again placed their carpets on the floor, sat upon them to prepare for another journey to the next land, Dancingland.

[back to index](#)

In this land we first toss our carpets up into the air, and as they float down, we catch them with our backs, toes, knees and elbows. Sometimes a teacher would turn or sway. It was wonderful to watch everyone just let go and dance! As the music was coming to an end, everyone was instructed to fly back home sitting on their carpets, and duck under the window sill again. I then encourage them to lie down and fall asleep and best of all, cover up with their carpets. When the music ended, I once again became the “babysitter”, entering the room I said, I’m finished with my ch..o..r..es...never finishing the sentences because I act surprised to see everyone fast asleep. I then respond with, “What is the window doing wide open?” as I pretend to close it.

Then I look around and notice that Sue has star dust in her hair (pretending to pull some out) and Grace has a feather in her hair (verbalizing as I go). Next, I gently wake up the group and show them the stardust and feathers.

Teachers: We went on a magic carpet ride.” (as I quietly prompt them)

Me: “Oh, you were dreaming.”

Teachers: “No, it was real.”

I stop in my tracks and say:

Me: “You mean that’s why the window was open, and that’s why I found these things in your hair? Can you show me how you fly?”

I put the music back on and they fly one more time. As I faded the music away, I ask everyone to fall back asleep. I then told them their moms and dads had just returned home and asked me:

Parents: “How were our children tonight? Did anything unusual happen?”

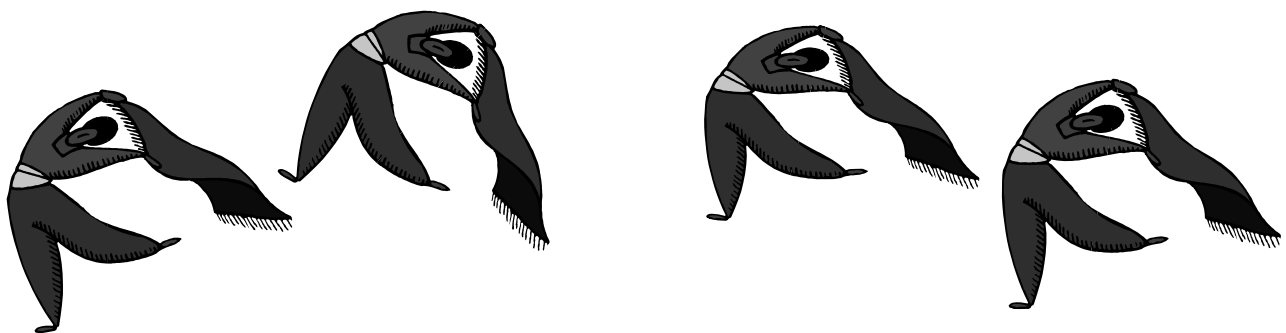
Me: “No. Just another ordinary boring night of watching the movie *Aladdin* for the millionth time!!”

Then some of the carpet flyers giggle and

Me: They must be having a pleasant dream.”

I always try to have a focused beginning, middle and ending to my creative movement lessons. I feel it is beneficial to create a story line not only for preschoolers but for all who wish to express themselves in creative movement.

The teachers were a joy to work with that evening. It made me realize we need to continue to use our imaginations and keep our bodies moving no matter if we are three or a hundred and three. I left that evening feeling energized. I could see my favorite lessons would be passed onto others by these teachers and they too would be flying as high as I was that night. □



Math In The Everyday Lives of Young Children

Cheryl Priest
Central Michigan University

Well before and long after children begin to count and recognize numbers, they are building the foundation upon which future math skills will grow. The principles of math begin with concepts like classification, patterning, and order. Unfortunately math becomes an ugly word at a very early stage in learning, yet we could not survive without a basic understanding of math. As adults who impact the lives of young children, we should look for creative, fun and exciting ways to introduce these basic concepts that will encourage children to build strong and necessary mathematical foundations.

Preschoolers begin to learn about classification by sorting objects into categories. Classification activities help children develop an eye for creative detail including similarities and differences.

It's 4:30 on Friday afternoon, and there are two children left in your care. They have been playing actively on the floor with about 5 tubs of various blocks and manipulatives. As their parents walk in the door, they quickly begin placing the blocks in the block tub, the pegs in the peg tub and so on. Many do not consider that this simple organization of toys into identifiable tubs will help children build their classification skills as they clean up the room. Classification can also extend into the art center through a variety of similar characteristics. Adults can support this combination of artistic math by asking questions and adding mathematical vocabulary to general conversations.

Most mathematical processes represent a pattern in some way or other. Counting by twos, fives and tens may be the first number patterns that children experience, but patterns are also evident in everything from the multiplication tables to algebraic equations.

It's snack time, and Mike is setting the "blue" table. As he walks around the table, placing silverware on each napkin, he says, "Fork, spoon, fork, spoon, fork...". Mike is building a skill that will help him understand and comprehend more complex math patterns.



A caregiver adds a strip of paper chain for each new day of the week. During this ritual, the children read the pattern on the chain, "green, blue, red, yellow, green, blue, red, yellow." When patterning becomes a normal part of daily life, children will begin to create their own patterns with everything from stickers to colored blocks.

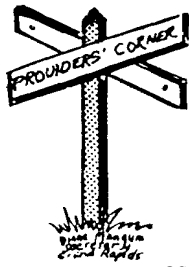
Other materials and activities that support patterning skills include weaving pattern placemats, stringing bead necklaces, creating small patterns with glue and spices, planting spring flower gardens in a pattern and much, much more. In elementary school, these same children will quickly recognize number patterns and similar concepts. They will also use these early classification and patterning skills to solve problems.

The development of patterning skills leads to knowledge of sequencing and order. When patterns repeat themselves, they are forming a sequence – "order can mean 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or order can mean from smallest to biggest" (Kohl & Gainer, 1996). Many creative activities can help children develop advanced skills in these areas while they are having fun making projects. With sequencing, children can draw morning to night pictures and practice putting them in order while talking about their day. The sequence of the school day or daily schedule can be displayed in a prominent place through photographs or drawings. Children may also create sequence sculptures through the use of patterning with items like foam blocks, toothpicks, and colored marshmallows.

As these skills lead to order, children enjoy building with materials such as various sized toilet paper and paper towel tubes, paper cups, and more. A little paint can add even more color and creativity. Children can also practice order through arrangements of items like leaves and seashells, and through sand art.

An abundant source for fun and creative math activities is the book titled **Math Arts: Exploring Math Through Art for 3 to 6 Year Olds**. This book will help any early childhood professional build pre-math concepts and skills with the children they care for, giving them a sound foundation for future success in elementary school. □

[back to index](#)



Preschool in A Group Home Day Care Setting

*Liza Wolfe, Group Day Care
Home Provider
Kalamazoo County*

I am beginning my twenty-sixth year as a preschool teacher in my home. Every year is more exciting than the last. I can't begin to tell you what being with the children has done for me.

My love for children began, I suppose, when my sister was born in my ninth year. I was about to give up dolls and here comes a real live one! I did a lot of babysitting as a teenager and was an early elementary major in college. I taught in public schools for two years until our children began to arrive. I was lucky not to have to work outside the home to supplement the family income but I missed those extra children.

Around the time our third (and last) child was four and in his second year of a co-op preschool, they lost their teacher because of relocation. The whole experience was like an awakening for me. His teacher was the best (and my mentor) and I could feel being drawn to such a commitment, but I was also very much committed to my family. And then I thought of starting a preschool in my home. I sent letters to the parents of preschoolers in the neighborhood and awaited responses. That was the last time I "advertised."

As I grew to a group day care license over the course of these past twenty-five years, I have been extremely fortunate to have the help of several wonderful assistants. Also, there has always been great support and help from my "parents."

I have four groups of 12. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I have a morning and an afternoon session for the four year olds. I lovingly call them "The Bold and the Beautiful." Tuesday morning and afternoon is for the three year olds—"The Young and the Restless." We advocate pro-social behavior, with learning by osmosis. That just means that we believe play to be a very important learning tool.

I have often thought about going "big" and putting my program in a public facility. That would allow me to take more children but I have never pursued that line.

Perhaps it's because I don't want to have to plow myself out of my driveway only to have to plow myself into another. Perhaps it's because I like to be able to throw a load of laundry in the washer or start

a good meal for my family. Perhaps....but I think the real reason is that I like working with small groups. It allows me to get to know each child on a personal level. Going bigger would require more children to cover costs and—well—it's just not worth it.

My helper and I keep ourselves moving. There is no sitting on our duffs, reading magazines or watching television. As a result, we have had very few injuries or altercations.

And then, because I am just across the street from a public school, I do before and after school care. I follow the public school schedule for days off and am closed when they are. Conference days and other half days are not part of our schedule. I don't take the grade school children when they have half days or days off.

I keep myself current on behavior and learning trends through periodicals. I feel that if I can learn one thing from each book or magazine I read, it is worth the price. I also keep a log of activities to refresh my mind from year to year. I communicate with the parents with a monthly newsletter and calendar.

So I've been able to "have it my way." I couldn't do anything else as long as I have the time and energy to do it. I love it! □

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Parent Communication As Easy As 1-2-3
Sue Bruno, Administrator
STEPS Montessori School, Saginaw

Staying true to developmentally appropriate practices and yet providing parents with evidence of the great work their children are doing can sometimes be difficult! We have not wanted to give in to dittoes and "make-it-like-the-teacher" art work but wanted to be sure parents understand the amount of DISCOVERY that happens daily in our classrooms.

Making a commitment to taking pictures has been the answer! We have colorful envelopes made up in bulk, with a note rubber cemented to the front that says, "We wanted to share a moment of your child's day." Having the stack of envelopes all made up ahead of time makes this so easy!!!

- 1-Capture the moment.
- 2-Develop the pictures.
- 3-Pop the pictures in an envelope and watch your families SMILE.



News From FIA

ABCs

AUTOMATED BILLING FOR CHILD CARE SYSTEM

The Family Independence Agency is making it easier to receive child care payments. ABCs, a new automated billing system, is a simplified billing system that is designed to ensure accurate payments to providers.

Beginning August 12, 2001, all child care providers who wish to receive payment from the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA) must bill FIA. Family day care homes, day care aides and relative providers will use telephone billing. This system works best with fewer children in care. Day care centers and group homes will use the new scannable billing form that has already been introduced. All providers will be able to bill using the Internet when that system is available to everyone.

Telephone Billing

By calling a toll free line, either **1-888-779-2775** (touch-tone system) or **1-888-826-1772** (voice-activated system), **family day care home, aides and relative providers** will report their hours of care and charge for care for each FIA-funded child by responding to voice prompts. This information generates the payment.

Hearing impaired providers may call the Michigan Relay Center at 1-800-649-3777 for assistance in billing for child care. Providers who are unable to use the telephone for billing will be granted an exception by the regional Community Coordinated Child Care (4C) office or by the local FIA office and allowed to use the scannable billing form for exception processing.

Internet Billing

All providers who care for FIA-funded children and have access to the Internet will be able to use the Internet for billing. The Internet site, which is expected to be available in October 2001, will display the names of FIA-funded children who are autho-

rized for care for that provider. Hours of care and amount charged are entered by the provider and totaled automatically. Billing information will then be sent electronically over the Internet to FIA for payment. This site will be secure and confidential.

Scannable Billing Form

Center and group home providers who don't use the Internet, will record billing information on a new scannable billing form. As in the past, the form has pre-printed information about the provider and children funded by FIA. The new form is similar to the current billing form but has been revised so that FIA can scan the information, allowing for quicker processing.

Direct Deposit of Child Care Payments

All providers who care for FIA-funded children, except day care aides, may have their checks deposited directly into their bank accounts. Direct deposit registration can be initiated through the Michigan Child Development and Care web site on the Internet at:

www.mfia.state.mi.us

Click on the "Today's Child" icon in the top right hand corner, then click on "Register to Receive Payments Electronically."

Why Change?

Currently, day care center and group day care home providers bill FIA for the care of FIA-funded children. Family day care homes, day care aides and relative care providers do not bill FIA. Instead, FIA staff compute the expected hours of care needed based on the parent's schedule and the needs of the child. Once the amount of child care is determined, the provider continues to receive the same reimbursement until a change is reported.

[back to index](#)

Benefits to the Provider

Providers will control the exact billing for their services. No longer will they need to rely on the case-worker to estimate the number of hours child care is needed, a system that requires frequent adjustments as the parent's and child's circumstances change. Instead, the provider will report the actual number of hours care is given, resulting in accurate payments that reflect actual services provided.

Benefits to FIA

Family day care home providers, relative care providers and day care aides represent the majority of providers who care for FIA-funded children. Under the current system, FIA staff persons are responsible for computing the expected number of hours, a task that is time-consuming. The new automated billing system will free FIA staff to spend more time working with their customers.

Training and Support

Comprehensive provider training in the new billing system is available through regional Community Coordinated Child Care agencies. By calling **1-866-4ChildCare (1-866-424-4532)**, toll-free, providers may obtain a training schedule or receive additional assistance from 4C staff. Local FIA staff will also be available to provide assistance. Family day care home providers, day care aides and relative providers will receive written instructions on how to bill FIA by telephone. □



Letter from a Provider

*Patricia Meekhof
Mema's Home Day Care,
Muskegon County*

This is in reply to the Providers' Corner article in issue 57.

I read this article with interest and decided to send you my solution to the problem that can arise. This has worked well. I include it in my information packet to every perspective family.

Also, being a group day care, I don't rely on my memory to relate day's events to the parents. We keep a daily diary for each child. We note what they ate, bowel movements, and how they spent their day. It is also a place to note "need more diapers," etc. The parents appreciate these. I have had some make scrap books of them as they show their little one's progress. P. S. I keep a carbon copy of each one. Documentation!!

Regarding FIA

I am happy to accept families who participate in the FIA services, however, due to some very costly experiences, I have had to institute the following rules:

Parents must make the weekly payment in full while waiting for the FIA payments to become activated.

Once FIA payment has been received, I will return any overpayment to the parents, except for an amount equal to two weeks care. This will be held against any unexpected departure.

I am sorry to have to do this but as in so many things, the dishonest persons have made it difficult for others.

I hope you can understand. You are trusting me with your child, I think you can trust me to be honest with your money.

Consumer Product Safety Commission Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys)

- Kolcraft LiteSport Stroller Recall
- Safety 1st Recall of Cabinet and Drawer Spring Latches
- Fisher-Price Recall of Portable Bassinets
- Infant Seat Pad Recall
- Hand Trucks and Baby Walker Recall
- Peg Perego USA Recall of High Chairs
- Century Recall of Multi-Use Strollers
- Swings on Backyard Gym Sets Recalled by Hedstrom
- Activity Rockers Recalled by COMBI International
- Changing Tables Recalled by Child Craft Industries
- Evenflo Joyride Infant Car Seat/Carrier Recall

For more information, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website: <http://www.cpsc.gov/>

Updated: 10/09/01

This publication provides topical information regarding young children who are cared for in licensed child care settings. We encourage child care providers to make this publication available to parents of children in care, or to provide them with the web address so they may receive their own copy. Issue 43 and beyond are available on the internet. **This document is in the public domain and we encourage reprinting.**

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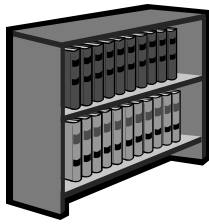
Billy Jones
Child Development &
Care, FIA

Directors Corner, continued from page 1

group homes will receive new licenses and new numbers. Criminal and Protective Services clearances for newly issued licenses and registrations must be less than 12 months old, so if you move, expect to complete new clearance request authorizations.

Parents will be able to search for home or center based care. Information from BITS that will help parents find child care will include the times and days of operation, the licensed capacity, and the age ranges of children accepted for care. This information will be transferred to our website on a regular basis.

I am excited about BITS! I hope that it will allow your licensing consultant to more easily and efficiently track what is going on with you and your license/registration. □



Resources: More Program Activities For Children

Art

Bredenkamp, S., and Copple, C. eds. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*. Rev. ed. Washington, DC:NAEYC.1997

Douglas, K. *Open-ended Art*. Redleaf Press, New.

Edwards, L. C. & Nabors, M.L. The Creative Arts Process: What It Is and What It Is Not. *Young Children* NAEYC 48 (3):77-81, 1993.

Engel, B.S. *Considering Children's Art: Why and How to Value Their Works*. Washington DC:NAEYC,1995.

Kohl, M.A. *Preschool Art:It's the Process, Not the Product*. Redleaf Press.

Swanson, L. Changes—How Our Nursery School Replaced Adult-Directed Art Projects with Child-Directed Experiences and Changed to an Accredited, Child-Sensitive, Developmentally Appropriate School. *Young Children* NAEYC 49 (4) 69-73,1994.

Creative Movement and Reading Through Movement

Altman, R. *Jump, Wiggle, Twirl, and Giggle*. Preschool—Grade 1. Redleaf Press. New

Bredahl, Lisa, Director, La Pique Dance Studio LLC (616)375 3938 Fax: (616) 375-2755
www.lpds.go2click.com
lbredahl@voyager.net

Heppner-Gamble, Mary Jane. She is available to teach creative movement to adults and children. She can be reached at (517) 651-6726 or write her at L6986 Chadwick Road, Laingsburg, Michigan 48848.

Larkin, V. & Louie Suthers. *What Will We Play Today?: Drama, Movement and Music Arts Games for Children 0-5 Years, Volumes 1 and 2*. Redleaf Press, New.

McCall, R. and Craft, D. *Moving With a Purpose: Developing Programs for Preschoolers of All Abilities*. Redleaf Press, New.

Science

Cohen, R. & Tunick, B. P., *Snails, Trails and Tadpole Tails: Nature Education for Young Children*. Redleaf Press. ISBN 0934140-78-2.

Petrash, C. *Earthways: Simple Environmental Activities for Young Children*, Gryphon House. ISBN 0-87659-156-X.

Wilder, T. Taking the Classroom Outdoors, *Texas Child Care Quarterly*.Spring 2001 Vol. 24, #4.

Mathematics

Building Numeracy, *Texas Child Care Quarterly*, Fall 1999.

Building Numeracy With More Homemade Materials, *Texas Child Care Quarterly*, Winter 1999.

Copley, J. *The Young Child and Mathematics*. Redleaf Press. New.

MacDonald, S. *Everday Discoveries: Amazingly Easy Science and Math Using Stuff You Already Have*, Redleaf Press.

Moomaw, S. and Hieronymus, B. *More Than Counting: Whole Math Activities for Preschool and Kindergarten* .Redleaf Press, 1995.

Schiller, P. and Person, L. *Count on Math: Activities for Small Hands and Lively Minds*. Gryphon House, 1997.

Sensory Exploration Table

West, S and Cox, A. *Sand and Water Play: Simple, Creative Activities for Young Children* Redleaf Press, New.

LICENSING UPDATE

Staff Training Policy

New licensing rules require that centers develop and implement a written, on-going staff training plan. This plan can be included in the center's staff policy handbook. The training plan includes any continuing education you require of your staff through conferences, workshop participation, staff meetings, and the like.

What must be covered by this plan?

Some topics are required by rule, but the plan should also include information that will help staff provide a safe, nurturing environment for children.

Required topics include:

- Child Abuse and Neglect Training (R400.5102)(2)
- Discipline Policy (R400.5107)(4)
- Emergency Evacuation Procedures (R400.5113a)(2)
- CPR and First Aid Training (Act 116, P.A. of 1973 as amended, Section 2)

Although not required by rule, centers may take this opportunity to train staff on:

- Center policies on the release of children
- Health policies, including administration of medications, ill children, cleaning and sanitizing, food handling, diapering and hand washing to name a few
- primary caregiving
- supervision
- recordkeeping
- information relevant to their programs such as bathroom rules, outdoor play rules
- appropriate programming for all age groups
- communicating with children
- conflict resolution
- center rules

Well trained staff are important to maintaining a high quality child care program. ▫

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